

Miscellaneous Notes

1. DHOLE OR INDIAN WILD DOG (*CUON ALPINUS*) MATING

On 10 September 1972 between 06.45 and 07.40 hours I had a pack of dhole under observation from a ground hide on the western bank of the Sigur river in the lower plateau of the Nilgiris not far from the Mudumalai Sanctuary. I counted 12 dhole of which 5 were sub-adults. The subadults (9 to 11 months old cubs) were playing in the water with, what I afterwards discovered to be, the putrid remains of a langur. Some of the adults were resting on the dry half of the river bed and the others were lolling, occasionally sniffing the genitals of each other.

One of the dhole, a dog, grew suspicious and ran down the river bed towards me until it was opposite my hide, only the water spread of about 10 metres separating us. It barked or rather yapped in my direction. As I did not give myself away it went back to the main group which was some 50 to 60 metres away. Soon the same dog, along with two companions returned to make further investigations. While it and another dhole stopped in the low undergrowth on the opposite bank about 30 to 35 metres away, the third dhole with a large growth on its chin ran forward and stopped on the slope about 25 metres away. All three sat looking in my direction, more curious than suspicious.

It soon became apparent that the dog's companion on the bank was a bitch, as the dog after smelling her genitals tried to mount her. Twice the bitch repulsed the dog's advances by sitting tight and snarling. The third time the dog succeeded. The copulation took place in a crouching position, more in the manner of lions and tigers than dogs which stand on all fours.

At the moment of copulation the bitch whimpered, sounding like a juvenile begging for favour. This attracted half the pack. As half a dozen dhole rushed towards the pair, I apprehended an attack. Instead, some actually crawled up to the pair in a submissive manner, wagging their tails and whimpering. The adults circled the pair and went away. But two subadults (probably the cubs of the bitch) remained in the vicinity a while longer.

The copulating pair were tied together, dog fashion. But unlike dogs they did not stand back to back nor were they engaged in a tug-of-war. But they lay flat on their sides, their bodies forming a semi-circle and facing each other. They spent the 7 minutes they remained

tied occasionally struggling to get up. On one occasion they nuzzled each other at the corners of the mouth, as dhole cubs do when begging for food.

The moment they got untied, the male moved away yelping. This again attracted the pack. Five dhole, two adults and three subadults surrounded the bitch. One of the adults smelt her genitals before moving away. But the subadults showed greater interest and smelt her all over and one licked her as she lay on the ground.

The male was not the biggest dog in the pack and it was not one of those which had shown interest in the females earlier. When the pairing took place the pack was all around thus disproving the popular theory that pairing dhole strike out on their own. In a well knit pack, breeding would appear to interest the whole pack and ceases to be the private affair of a pair.

The dhole bitch with an unmistakable growth on her chin promises to make identification of the pack simple and further observations interesting.

"CANOWIE"

E. R. C. DAVIDAR

COONNOOR-1,

NILGIRIS,

October 30, 1972.

2. ON THE DOMESTICATION OF THE OTTER BY FISHERMEN IN BANGLADESH

The use of cormorants for fishing is well known. Apparently, in certain areas of Bangladesh (Jessore District), certain tribes of fishermen have an age-old tradition of domesticating otters for catching fish. This note is based on the enquiries made by the author during two visits to Bangladesh in 1972. As trained animals may be sold at a price of Rs. 800/- or more the advantages in fishing with them must be quite considerable.

The trained otters begin to bark at about 4 a.m. which is the fishermen's time for fishing.

The fishermen carry the otters with them in their boats to the fishing grounds. Once the nets are set in the water, the otters are released and they herd the fish into the net. The otters also catch large fishes sometimes weighing more than the otter. These big fish the otters bring to the boat, for the fishermen to collect. Small fish are consumed by the otters during the hunt.

J/146, PAHARPUR ROAD,

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GARDEN REACH,

CALCUTTA - 24,

January 29, 1973.